

REMARKS

The present Amendment amends claims 13, 14 and 25, and leaves claims 15-24 unchanged. Therefore, the present application has pending claims 13-25.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

Claims 13-20 and 22-25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,493,675 to Kanaya, et al. ("Kanaya"). This rejection is traversed for the following reasons. With regard to dependent claim 22, it appears that the Examiner made a typographical error, as there is no discussion regarding the rejection of claim 22 as being anticipated. Instead, the Examiner discusses the rejection of claim 22 as being obvious under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Regarding the remaining claims 13-20 and 23-25, Applicants submit that the features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with any of the other references of record. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Amendments were made to the claims to more clearly describe features of the present invention. Specifically, amendments were made to the claims to more clearly describe that the present invention is directed to a server computer that conducts item allocation in a workflow system, and a workflow system, as recited, for example, in independent claims 13, 14 and 25.

Claims 13, 15, 17, 19, and 23

The present invention, as recited in claim 13, provides a server computer that conducts item allocation in a workflow system. The workflow system processes items in computers in accordance with a previously defined business process, and the server computer is connected to a plurality of other computers and a database for storing items. The server computer includes an item extraction condition table that includes an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key corresponding to the business process. The server computer also includes storage for storing a plurality of items received from the other computers and an item allocation processing section for receiving an item acquisition request containing a business process identifier from one of the plurality of computers. The item allocation processing section also extracts a plurality of items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, based on an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition request. The item allocation processing section also selects one item from among the extracted items by using an item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection included in the received item acquisition request. Furthermore, the item allocation processing section transmits one item to the computer that transmitted the item acquisition request. The prior art does not disclose all these features.

The above described features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by any of the references of record,

particularly Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with the other references of record.

Kanaya discloses an apparatus and system for managing work flow. However, there is not teaching or suggestion in Kanaya of the server computer that conducts item allocation in a workflow system, as recited in the claims.

Kanaya's apparatus and system includes a plurality of work flow support units, and a work flow support unit management unit. The work flow support unit management unit determines which work flow support unit is to manage a work flow. At that time, the work flow support unit management unit refers to the load condition of each work flow support unit to instruct the work flow support unit indicating the smallest load state to manage work flows. In this way the concentration of the process load on a specific work flow support unit is prevented.

One feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 13, includes an item extraction condition table including an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key corresponding to a business process. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. To support the assertion that Kanaya discloses an item extraction condition table, the Examiner cites column 13, line 44 to column 14, line 28, and Figs. 5-7. More specifically, the Examiner asserts that Fig. 6 is an example of a workflow management table that uses Work ID's and Work Flow ID's as item selection keys to identify the desired work activity. However, Kanaya's use of Work ID's and Work Flow ID's in a workflow management table is not the same as the use of an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key in an item acquisition range

condition table, as claimed. As described in column 13, line 44 to column 14, line 28, Kanaya discloses a work information management table that stores the work process flow of each work activity (e.g., issuing an order, issuing a production request, manufacturing a product) and necessary information (e.g., person in charge of the work, a work flow engine to be used) in each work activity. The Work ID shown in Fig. 6 indicates a serial number assigned each time a work process is generated. The Work Flow ID indicates a work process, such as placing an order. The Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item acquisition range condition and the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide an acquisition range condition or a selection key as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Other features of the present invention, as recited in claim 13, include an item allocation processing section for receiving an item acquisition request containing a business process identifier from a computer, and for extracting a plurality of items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, based on an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition request. The item allocation processing section also selects one item from among the extracted items by using an item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in the received item acquisition request, and transmits the one item to the computer that transmitted the item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose these features.

To support the assertion that Kanaya discloses extracting items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, the Examiner asserts that Fig. 9 shows that items are searched for in the workflow engine management table based on the type of request and using the Work ID as a key, and if the key matches, then the item is selected and added to the work information management table for the process request to be executed. This feature of Kanaya is quite different from the present invention. As previously discussed, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest the use of an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key in an item allocation processing section, as claimed. It follows, therefore, that Kanaya fails to teach or suggest an item allocation processing section for extracting a plurality of items satisfying the item acquisition range condition, based on an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition request, as claimed.

Furthermore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest an item allocation processing section for selecting one item from among the extracted items using an item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in the item acquisition request. As previously discussed, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest the use of an item selection key, as claimed, and as shown in Fig. 10 of the present invention. Therefore, Kanaya does not disclose an item allocation processing section using an item selection key to select one item from among the extracted items, as claimed.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “an item extraction condition table including an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key corresponding to said business process” as recited in claim 13.

Furthermore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “an item allocation processing section for receiving an item acquisition request containing a business process identifier from a computer included in said other computers, extracting, based on an item acquisition range condition included in said received item acquisition request, a plurality of items satisfying said item acquisition range condition, selecting one item from among said extracted items by using an item selection key and information corresponding to an item selection key included in said received item acquisition request, and transmitting one item to said computer included in said other computers that transmitted said item acquisition request” as recited in claim 13.

Claims 14, 16, 18, 20, and 24

The present invention, as recited in claim 14, provides a server computer that conducts item allocation in a workflow system. The workflow system processes items in accordance with an order of a previously defined business process, and the server computer is connected to a plurality of client computers and a database for storing items. The server computer includes storage for storing a plurality of items received from other computers. The server computer also includes an item allocation processing section for extracting a plurality of items from the database, so as to at least allocate identical items to two or more client computer, based on item acquisition requests received from the client computers. The item allocation

processing section also extracts one item for each of the client computers from among the extracted items, using an item selection key included in the item acquisition request. Also included in the server computer is a transmission section that transmits the extracted item to each of the client computers that requested item acquisition. The prior art does not disclose all these features.

The above described features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by any of the references of record, particularly Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with the other references of record.

As previously discussed, Kanaya discloses an apparatus and system for managing work flow. However, there is no teaching or suggestion in Kanaya of the server computer that conducts item allocation in a workflow system of the present invention, as recited in the claims.

One feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 14, includes an item allocation processing section for extracting a plurality of items so as to allocate identical items to two or more client computers included in the client computers, based on item acquisition requests received from the plurality of client computers. Kanaya does not disclose this feature, and the Examiner provides no support for the assertion that Kanaya discloses this feature. The Examiner merely states that claim 14 recites substantially similar subject matter as claim 13, and asserts that claim 14 is rejected on the same basis of claim 13. However, claim 13 does not recite all the features of claim 14. Specifically, claim 13 does not recite and Kanaya does not

teach an item allocation processing section for extracting a plurality of items so as to allocate identical items to two or more client computers, in the manner claimed.

Another feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 14, includes an item allocation processing section for extracting one item for each of the client computers from among the extracted items by using an item selection key included in the item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. The Examiner suggests that either the Work ID or the Work Flow ID of Kanaya corresponds to the item selection key of the present invention. As previously discussed, the Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide a selection key as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “an item allocation processing section for extracting a plurality of items from said database so as to at least allocate identical items to two or more client computers included in said client computers based on item acquisition requests received from said client computers, and extracting one item for each of said client computers from among said extracted items by using an item selection key included in said item acquisition request” as recited in claim 14.

Claim 25

The present invention, as recited in claim 25, provides a workflow system. The workflow system includes a plurality of client computers, where a server

computer is connected to the plurality of client computers and a database for storing items. The server computer extracts a workflow control program, where the workflow control program, when executed, causes the server to perform a step of receiving item acquisition conditions and item acquisition requests from the client computers. The program also causes the server to extract items from among items stored in the database, based on an item acquisition range condition included in the received item acquisition requests to select an item from among the extracted items by using an item selection key included in the item acquisition request. The program also causes the server to transmit the extracted item to the computer. In the workflow system of the present invention, each of the client computers executes a workflow client program for causing the client computer to select items to be processed in the client computer from among items received from the server computer using an item selection key. The prior art does not disclose all these features.

The above described features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims, are not taught or suggested by any of the references of record, particularly Kanaya, whether taken individually or in combination with the other references of record.

As previously discussed, Kanaya discloses an apparatus and system for managing work flow. However, there is no teaching or suggestion in Kanaya of the workflow system of the present invention, as recited in the claims.

One feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 25, includes where the server computer extracts items, based on an item acquisition range condition included in a received item acquisition request, to select an item from among the extracted items using an item selection key included in the item acquisition request. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. The Examiner suggests that either the Work ID or the Work Flow ID of Kanaya corresponds to the item acquisition range condition or the item selection key of the present invention. As previously discussed, the Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item acquisition range condition and the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other features of Kanaya, provide an acquisition range condition or an item selection key, as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Another feature of the present invention, as recited in claim 25, includes where each of the client computers executes a workflow client program for causing the client computer to select items to be processed in the client computer from among items received from the server computer using an item selection key. Kanaya does not disclose this feature. The Examiner suggests that either the Work ID or the Work Flow ID of Kanaya corresponds to the item selection key of the present invention. As previously discussed, the Work ID and the Work Flow ID of Kanaya are quite different from the item selection key of the present invention. Specifically, neither the Work ID nor the Work Flow ID of Kanaya, or any other

features of Kanaya, provide an item selection key as shown, for example, in Fig. 10 of the present invention.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest where a server computer performs a step of “extracting items from among items stored in said database, based on an item acquisition range condition included in said received item acquisition requests to select an item from among said extracted items by using an item selection key included in said item acquisition request” as recited in claim 25.

Furthermore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest “wherein each of said client computers executes a workflow client program for causing said client computer to select items to be processed in the client computer from among items received from said server computer by using an item selection key” as recited in claim 25.

Therefore, Kanaya fails to teach or suggest the features of the present invention, as now more clearly recited in the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(e) rejection of claims 13-20 and 23-25 are respectfully requested.

The remaining references of record have been studied. Applicants submit that they do not supply any of the deficiencies noted above with respect to the references used in the rejection of claims 13-20 and 23-25.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claims 21 and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kanaya. Claims 21 and 22 are dependent on claims 13 and 14,

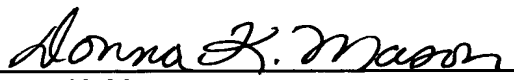
respectively. Therefore, dependent claims 21 and 22 are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above regarding independent claims 13 and 14.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that claims 13-25 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, early allowance of claims 13-25 is respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of Mattingly, Stanger, Malur & Brundidge, P.C., Deposit Account No. 50-1417 (referencing attorney docket no. 500.40786CX1).

Respectfully submitted,

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